



Leaving Singapore



H.M.S. Cassandra heads into the S.W. Monsoon

June to August 1961--The Persian Gulf

Having embarked F02, we sailed on 26th June with TIDEREACH, RELIANT and RESURGENT, the destroyers CASSANDRA and CARYSFORT and the submarine TEREDO for exercises on passage to Hong Kong, where we were due on 2nd July. On the 29th June we were nearly half-way there and had just started the day's flying in rather inclement weather when the signal arrived from C.-in-C., "Proceed to the Persian Gulf with all despatch." We had heard the B.B.C. reporting General Kassem's threats about Kuwait which had only just been guaranteed her independence by Britain, but the shining prospect of Hong Kong had rather taken our thoughts away from the implications of these reports.

All aircraft were recovered immediately and, with the two destroyers, we retracted our steps. Unfortunately the R.F.A.'s were now astern of us, and as we had been due to fuel and store the following day, we were short of fuel to start with—particularly the destroyers.

The next day we were making 26 knots towards Singapore and flying at the same time. F02 was flown ashore by Gannet to confer with C.-in-C. and preparations went on onboard. A nasty accident occurred on the flight deck when two ratings loading a 2-inch R.P. on a Vixen were badly



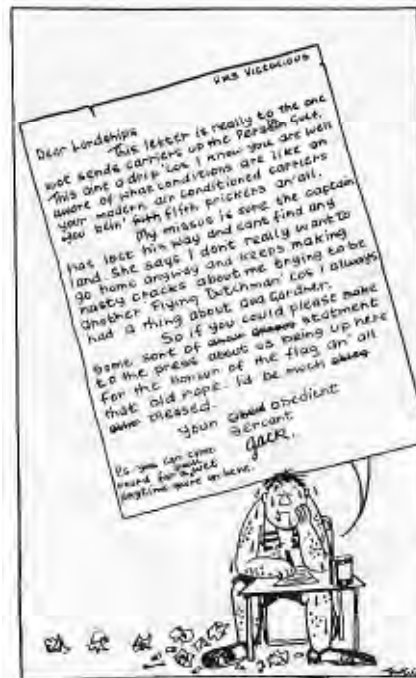
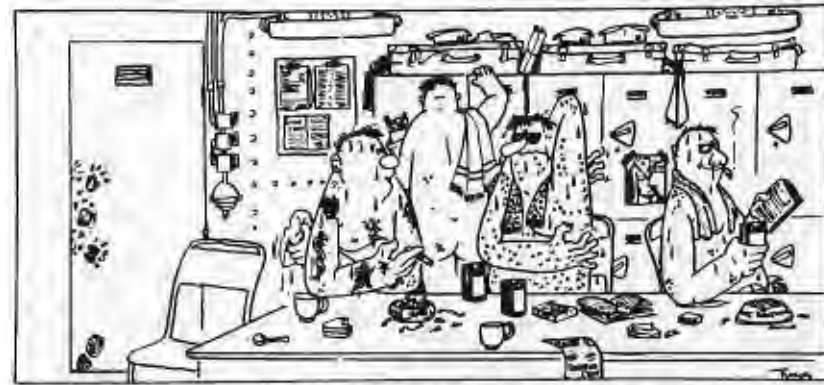
RAS with Orangeleaf

injured when it went off. They were taken to hospital in Singapore by CARYSFORT. One lost an arm and the other, who was extensively burned, made a good recovery only to meet with a serious motor cycle accident on his subsequent return to U.K.

In the evening we fuelled CASSANDRA and then passed through the Straits of Singapore and Malacca. LINCOLN joined us on the way. On the 1st July, off Penang, FO2 returned and we pressed on to find WAVE RULER waiting for us off the north of Sumatra early on the 2nd. She was very welcome as all ships were getting very short of fuel. Topped up, we set off across the Bay of Bengal at 23 knots, and on 4th CASSANDRA landed mail at Colombo and again fuelled from us. We tried to fly again but we had reached the edge of the S.W. monsoon and the weather was much too bad. In the next three days across the Arabian Sea we had the full force of the S.W. monsoon and were unable to keep up our high speed. However, on the 8th we reached the shelter of the Gulf of Oman and fuelled from ORANGE LEAF, and at 1600 that afternoon we entered the Persian Gulf. The temperature had now risen to 93°F. and the sea water temperature to 92°F., and the air was full of sand blown by the fresh wind.

On the 9th FO2 and his staff transferred to LINCOLN and entered Bahrain to confer with the Flag Officer Middle East. They returned late that night and we set off for the Kuwait area with CASSANDRA and LINCOLN in company.

The situation in Kuwait at this time was that there were 5,000 British troops ashore; BULWARK and her Commando were there; three Lock-





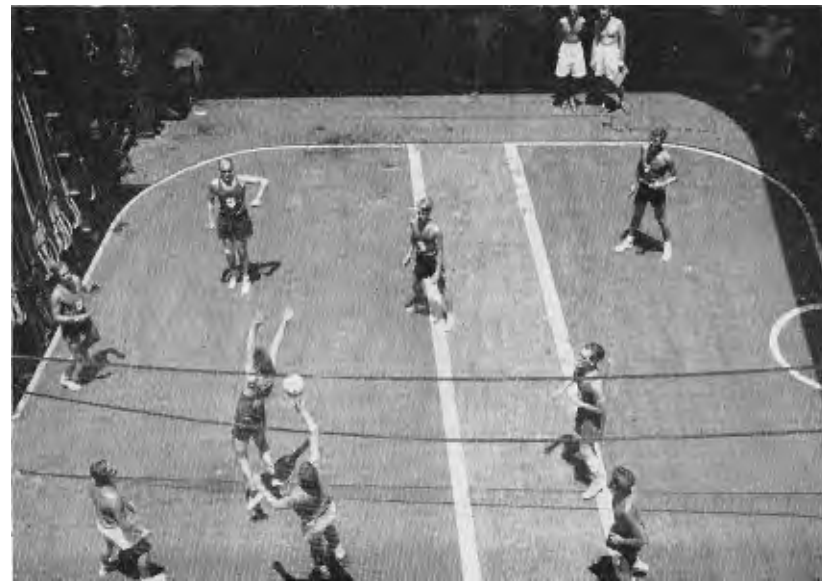
Cooling Sprays



Frying Eggs on the Flight Deck



Deck Hockey



Volley Ball

class frigates were in. Kuwait; we were there ready to provide air defence; and CENTAUR was through the Canal. Kassem had made no move.

Having been left miles behind, TIDEREACH and RELIANT caught us up and we fuelled and stored on 13th. At dawn on the 14th we went to "Action Stations" as this was thought to be a likely date for Kassem to launch an attack. However, there was no *sign* of movement from the Iraqis and so we carried on with a normal day's flying.

Persian Gulf life now developed into a steady cycle of three or four days flying, one day R.A.S., one day maintenance. We know that *we* had to keep this up until CENTAUR relieved us on 31st July. Mail arrived daily by courtesy of 849B's Gannets until they were grounded due to hydraulic hose failures, and the task was undertaken by a frigate or destroyer. We hardly ever saw the shore.

The routine now consisted of flying until about 1300, make and mend and open flight deck in the afternoon, and flying again in the evening, did a lot to relieve the worst effects of being in the hottest ship in the Navy in the hottest part of the world at the hottest time of the year. But nevertheless the temperatures and conditions on board were very trying to say the least. Something like 75 per cent of us suffered from prickly heat, but there were remarkably few cases of heat exhaustion. At one stage we did not seem to get much of a mention in the U.K. press, so the cooks fried some eggs on the flight deck to draw attention. We got our press and were even visited by some journalists.

The weather varied from the comparatively dry heat of the N.W.'ly Shamal to the very high humidity of the S.E. wind. In the latter case conditions became extreme and we were very thankful when CENTAUR hove in sight on 31st July. F02 and his staff transferred to her and by 1600 that afternoon We were off down the Gulf with CAMPERDOWN.

803 Squadron were due for 50 per cent change of complement at this time, but the new ratings, due to join the following day, were delayed 24 hours. Of course, we could not leave the area without them so, having replenished from RELIANT we pressed on out of the Gulf to fuel from WAVE RULER in the Gulf of Oman, and sent CAMPERDOWN into Bahrein with the men on draft and to wait for the replacements. At this stage the air-conditioning plants finally gave up and provided us with the most unpleasant night of the whole Gulf period.

CAMPERDOWN came up with the new draft during the night and we were free to go. We set off for Mombasa at 23 knots on two shafts, the centre being closed down to achieve some maintenance on passage. The S.W. monsoon was still blowing hard and as we rounded the eastern tip of Arabia and left the shelter of the Gulf of Oman, the temperature of both sea and air dropped by 12 degrees or so in 30 minutes. The relief was tremendous !

With no flying on passage and a steady speed, we made good progress and, having fuelled from TIDEREACH on 7th August, we entered Mombasa on the 8th. We had completed 52 days at sea out of 54, of which 43 was in an unbroken period. This we claim as a Carrier post-war record! Since leaving Singapore on 15th June we had covered 20,877 miles, and so ended a period in our commission which is the better for being over.



. Centaur hove in sight . .



Entering Mombasa

August to September 1961 — Mombasa to Singapore

Mombasa was a haven in the true sense of the word and we all had time to draw breath and take stock of the past and of the future. Kuwait had had a disastrous effect on the carrier programme in that CENTAUR would now be very late home for her docking and leave, and so would be delayed in relieving us. However, the Captain was quite clear that the only foreseeable part of the future was that VICTORIOUS would be home in time for Christmas, but the interim period was — well, fluid! We would remain on the Middle East Station as long as there was any requirement for a carrier to be within six days steaming of Kuwait.

With this as background, everyone made the best of the Mombasa dry season, the weather being cool by our standards. Forty-eight hours leave was granted to everyone, the ship was washed and painted from truck to waterline and all the aircraft thoroughly overhauled. Safari expeditions into the game reserves became the most popular outside interest, and there was the normal run of sports.

While at Mombasa we said farewell to TIDEREACH who had followed us everywhere for nearly a year. She was to accompany CENTAUR home for refit and was to be relieved by CENTAUR'S tanker, OLN A.

Mombasa cannot compare with Cape Town for size, beauty nor wealth, but for hospitality it could and did, and the locals went to great lengths to make our stay the success it was, for which we are very grateful.

On Monday, 21st August, we sailed for flying exercises in the Mombasa area and expected to return for another week-end. During the week Zanzibar had a little local trouble and we were able to be of assistance in lending two Choppers to the police for a day, and sending the jets to fly over the offending villages. We were going to send the Choppers for longer, but quite unexpectedly it was announced that we were released from our obligations on the Middle East Station. In spite of all our arrangements for another week-end in Mombasa we had to set off for Singapore as soon as possible in order to let the dockyard tackle very important work on the flight deck and, furthermore, we had to collect two Vixens which CENTAUR had left for us at Aden on the way.

So, having fuelled from OLN A for the first time on the evening of 25th August, we made for Aden at high speed with YARMOUTH in company. We arrived off Aden on the 29th and carried out flying exercises in the area until OLN A caught up and went in to Aden to fill up.

On 2nd September, with RELIANT, OLN A and YARMOUTH in company, we set off for Singapore. We had not seen RELIANT for over a month so two days R.A.S. from her was the first requirement and then we pressed on to the vicinity of Ceylon. BLACKPOOL joined us from Mombasa on 7th and when we had fuelled her we tried flying. but the

wind was across the swell and the ship would not steer to the accuracy needed for peace-time flying. Conditions were not expected to change in that locality so, having fuelled from OLN A again, we crossed the Bay of Bengal at high speed (including a full-power trial) with YARMOUTH in company to a good flying area in the lee of Sumatra. BLACKPOOL, in the meantime, had collected mail from Colombo and was following on.

We flew off Penang until 14th, when we launched some aircraft to shore in Singapore, replenished from RELIANT again, and after a fast night passage down the Malacca Straits, arrived at the Naval Base on 15th September.

We had been away from Singapore almost exactly three months and in that time we had been at sea for 75 days out of 92 and had covered 29,975 miles at an average speed of 16¾ knots.

The total score to date — one year's running—was 79,247 miles in 201 days actual time under way. In fact, we were under way on some part of 227 different days.



One Year in Commission—Cutting the Cake



*Top.- Salim Road, - Mombasa — Kilindini Road, Mombasa
 Centre: Scimitar over Mt. Kilimanjaro — Tsavo Game Reserve— Leaving Mombasa
 Below: Gannet Recovery — Scimitar Launch — Vixen Launch*

September to November 1961—East of Singapore

Three weeks in Singapore were devoted to the backlog of maintenance of the ship and aircraft, not forgetting the usual round of sports fixtures of course, and on 5th October we were ready to sail again.

At this time F02 in BELFAST had collected a representative selection of the Commonwealth Far East ships together for a series of exercises called "Fotex". Although we were in the area we only took a limited part in these exercises. The helicopters joined in the anti-submarine exercises and the jets simulated attacks on the Fleet; otherwise we carried out our own flying programme. We also replenished from OLNA and RELIANT, and took part in a close air support exercise with the Army. F02 offered us an anchor billet at Pulau Tioman for the week-end, but this was politely declined—we felt we had seen enough of that tropical island!

On the 13th we left the Singapore area for Hong Kong (for the second time!) with OLNA and RELIANT and this time we made it. We entered Hong Kong harbour at 0930 on 17th - just three and a half months later than originally planned.

This ship is too big to berth alongside the dockyard wall, so we were at No. 1 buoy in the middle of the narrowest part of the harbour. Fortunately an excellent ship to shore ferry service overcame most of the inconvenience of not being alongside. The weather was good throughout our stay but as it was still the typhoon season leave was slightly restricted until it was clear that the weather could be guaranteed for at least 24 hours. Had we been there as originally planned in July, the chance of getting a typhoon would have been much greater and leave would certainly have been restricted.

"Rabbits" was the watchword and an immense amount of goods appeared onboard, to be stowed in every nook and cranny in the ship. The P.O.S.B. was well and truly caned and by the end of the eight-day visit most people were broke from shopping and/or gay living!

All good things come to an end and this, our second really good visit, finished when we sailed on 25th October with CAVALIER as our plane-guard, to R.A.S. from OLNA and RELIANT, and to join U.S.S. TICONDEROGA and her escorts off the Philippines for exercise "Crosstie".

On the 26th the two carriers flew strikes against each other, and the next day we joined company. We fired a salute to Rear Admiral Conolly, Comcardiv 7, flying his flag in TICONDEROGA (short titles, "Tic" or "Tico"), and then 825 Squadron transferred personnel between the two ships. After exercising the guns' crews with a sleeve shoot for all ships in the force, the carriers separated again, with escorts of opposite nationality, for a day's private flying to show each other's experts how the flight deck worked. During this afternoon one rather impatient Vixen couldn't wait for the catapult to fire, but broke out of her hold-back and trundled over

the bows into the sea. The crew, bruised but otherwise unhurt, were picked up by the S.A.R. helicopter before the U.S. destroyer escort could get there.

On Saturday, 28th October, all ships berthed in Subic Bay, the U.S. Naval Base, for the week-end. Exchange visits between ships by all personnel, discussions about operating each other's aircraft, and making use of the splendid clubs kept everyone busy.

The exercise started again early on the Monday morning when we left harbour in the face of submarine opposition which was successfully dealt with by 825 Squadron helicopters. The object of this part of the exercise was to operate our aircraft from "Tico's" deck, and vice versa, and we exchanged six aircraft of different types for one recovery and launch each.

Unfortunately on the second day a Vixen nose oleo collapsed when landing on "Tico's" deck. Apparently a "Demon" had landed without undercarriage the night before and almost gone through the deck. The repair had left a bit of a bump! The Vixen had to be transferred from carrier to carrier by lighter off Subic at the end of the day. We also replenished from each other's tankers -- "Tico" from OLNA and "Vic" from CHEMUNG.

This very successful exercise (although expensive in Vixens) came to an end late on 31st and we departed for the Singapore area at high speed. We replenished again from RELIANT and exercised with the Army on the 3rd before arriving at the Naval Base on Saturday, 4th.



At No. 1 Buoy



*Top: Entering Hong Kong — Hong Kong by Night — Divisions at Hong Kong
 Centre: Alongside at Subic Bay — Cross Operating Phantom — Cross Operating Sky Hawk
 Below: Cross Operating Sky Raider — Whoops ! — U.S. Destroyer Fuels from Olna*



Admiral Sir David Luce Inspects Divisions at Singapore



Diverted to Mombasa



Transferring the Flag !



Suez Canal

November to December 1961--Westward Ho!

After a comparatively brief stay in Singapore to do the final shopping, self-maintain and say farewell, we sailed for Aden on 14th November. CHICHESTER was our planeguard and RELIANT, RETAINER and OLN had gone on ahead. After a fast passage through the Malacca Straits we arrived off Penang on the 15th for a day's flying and to recover the few aircraft that had been ashore in Singapore, including the COD which had been languishing there for want of spares for five months. CHICHESTER returned to Singapore that night and we pressed on westwards.

Early on the 16th the Admiralty did it again! Another diversion, this time to Mombasa on a mission of mercy so that 825 Squadron's helicopters could assist with the flood relief. There was an audible sigh of relief as the Executive Officer announced that the ship's arrival in U.K. would not be delayed.

Having topped up from OLN we set off across the Indian Ocean, for the fourth time, at 22 knots to replenish from RELIANT and RETAINER on 17th and collect mail from Colombo by COD. We then carried on to Mombasa at 25 knots, aiming to arrive on Wednesday, 22nd. Fuel consumption would not have allowed this high speed had not R.F.A. APPLE LEAF been sent from the Gulf to meet and replenish us on the 19th. She is a freighter tanker and had not replenished a ship before but, nevertheless, all went well.

We arrived at 1530 on the 22nd and berthed alongside. 825 Squadron personnel and equipment were disembarked in the evening and the helicopters flew up country the following morning to start the work of rescue and relief which they carried out so well. After a brief renewal of acquaintances made last August we sailed again at 1300 on the 23rd for Aden, to cross the Equator for the sixth time and to catch up with our original programme. Four days flying on passage and in the Aden area made up for some of the flying we had lost by our fast passage to Mombasa.

On the 25th we met RHYL on her way to Mombasa and she had brought some mail for us which, naturally, we were very glad to take from her. Then on the 26th PLYMOUTH joined us to act as planeguard.

By altering the replenishing programme we had been able to give three hours leave to each watch while lying at anchor off Aden. In the evening we set off again (at 22 knots as usual!) for Suez, replenishing from RELIANT on 29th, flying on 30th and finally meeting CENTAUR in the Gulf of Suez after dark on 1st December. We took the Choppers of 824 Squadron in place of those of 825 which CENTAUR was to take over in Mombasa. F.O.A.C. and his operational staff also transferred and his flag was rehoisted. Later still that evening we anchored in Suez Bay and prepared for the Canal transit.



Suez Canal



Gully ! Gully !



Royal Flush V



Pantomime

There had been a lot of discussion for a considerable time about whether we could get through the Canal safely, mainly because of depth of water but also because of our width at the flight deck. The decision to try was made when HERMES completed the transit successfully both ways. There was a slight feeling of tension on the bridge when we entered the Canal at first light on 2nd December, leading the convoy, but this was soon dispelled when it was evident how well the ship handled, and the transit was completed without any crises. Even the railway bridge proved no problem. Incidentally, it is a fallacy that we can only go northbound through the Canal because of this bridge we can go both ways.

We cleared the Canal at 1900 and replenished from OLN, who had been following immediately behind us, and then set off fast to the west. We were west of Suez again and were due home this month!

On 3rd DIANA came out from Malta with some mail and to be our planeguard. We did some night flying and then on the 4th took part in a Close Air Support exercise with 40 Commando in the Tobruk area. The 5th found us approaching Malta again at high speed for night flying, and on to replenish from OLN and FORT DUQUENSE west of Sicily on the 6th, where CROSSBOW and BATTLEAXE joined us for exercise "Royal Flush V" with the U.S. Sixth Fleet. The replenishment was completed just before the weather turned bad, and all day on the 7th we were hove-to not very far from where we had experienced the bad weather and defective rudder almost a year ago. "Royal Flush" was cancelled for the day while all ships moved into the lee of Sardinia. Luckily we were able to carry on with the second day of "Royal Flush", the weather having eased, and valuable experience was gained. Then, in the afternoon, we started launching the jets direct to U.K. when eight Vixens and a Scimitar went off. More went on the next day after we had replenished once more from OLN. This enabled us to arrive in Malta on Sunday forenoon instead of the Monday as planned, for a heavy transfer programme with ARK ROYAL.

Ark's Chopper Squadron (815) were virtually grounded and we were to take them back to U.K. complete. The remainder of F.O.A.C.'s staff and gear was also transferred, as well as a couple of dead Gannets from Halfar.

At 0930 we sailed direct for Portsmouth, met OLN for a final top-up on 14th, and passed Gibraltar that night. This night also we enjoyed a pantomime in the hangar and began to feel that Christmas was really close, a feeling that was enhanced in the Channel on Sunday when, having launched the Gannets to Culdrose, we had our Carol Service in the Forward Dining Hall. We finally anchored in Spithead in the early hours of 18th December ready for Customs examination. They spent all that day with us, and then on Tuesday the great day dawned and we proceeded.